



# Safe Harbor News

## Forest Landbird Legacy Program

The Forest Landbird Legacy Program (FLLP) is a voluntary wildlife conservation program for private non-industrial forest landowners in all parts of North Carolina who want to manage their mature forests to benefit forest dwelling landbirds. The focus of the FLLP is migratory “birds of conservation concern” identified by the Partners In Flight assessment for North Carolina. The FLLP will build appreciation for songbirds and their forest habitats, provide recognition to landowners that conserve forest landbirds, promote forest management to sustain migratory bird populations, and provide expert planning and financial assistance for restoration and enhancement practices.

**Why should I participate?** FLLP participants receive assistance from professional wildlife biologists and foresters to develop a landbird management plan. Reimbursement for a portion of costs incurred implementing a forest landbird conservation plan is also available. Each participating landowner can receive a Forest Landbird Legacy sign and certificate recognizing their participation in the program and their commitment to bird conservation.

**Who can participate in the FLLP?** Cost sharing is available to any non-industrial forest landowners including private owners, partnerships, corporations, not-for-profits, local governments, and Indian tribes. Federal agencies, state agencies, and commercial forest industries cannot receive cost sharing. However, planning assistance and program recognition may still be given to participants that are not eligible for cost share. Land eligibility is determined by “the 50/50 rule” that calls for forests to be a minimum of 50 years old and 50 acres in size. The forested or wooded land must have management potential and must contribute to a larger landscape affect that benefits forest landbirds. Exceptions may be made to the 50/50 rule if surrounding landscape contributes to the goals of the program. The program is available statewide.

**How long do I have to participate in order to receive funding?** FLLP participants will be asked to sign an agreement to implement and maintain their habitat conservation plan over a span of at least 10 years. Each participant will also be asked to demonstrate their commitment to the FLLP goals by sharing part of the cost to implement the conservation plan using their own resources which may include agreed-to materials, labor, or money.

**What type of conservation work will be done on my land?**

Forest landbird conservation plans will be considerate of the participant’s goals, values, concerns, and abilities. Conservation plans may include prescriptions for a variety of treatments such as snag creation, prescribed burning, control of exotic invasive plants, tree-release cutting, creation of gaps in the canopy, habitat improvement plantings, and in some cases simply maintaining the status quo.

**How much work or money will I have to contribute?** FLLP will contribute up to 75% of the cost of recommended actions. Project costs will be calculated based on the average state-wide cost of a practice as indicated on the FLLP cost rate list. Payments will be made to participants by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). The participants are asked to provide a contribution of materials, labor, or money totaling at least 25% of the project cost.

**When will I receive assistance and/or funding?** Participants receive cost reimbursement after the project is com-

## Group working to save longleaf-pine ecosystem

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Not many things today seem as unending as the interstate. Just a few hundred years ago, though, there would have been something to rival this vast concrete network. If longleaf pine forests still stretched uninterrupted from eastern Texas to southern Virginia, only a three-day drive would put the evergreens to a westbound traveler's back.

"Longleaf pines are in serious decline," said Brady Beck, the Sandhills Game Land biologist. "About 97 percent have been destroyed." In several short centuries, 87 million acres of the original 90 million have been lost to the naval stores industry, logging and commercial and residential development. "Much of the Sandhills longleaf had disappeared by the early 1900s," said Pete Campbell, a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Southern Pines.

Although loggers then and now value the longleaf for its rot resistance and strength, the tree matures too slowly for the patience of harvesters. To satisfy the industry's appetite, scoured longleaf stands began to be replanted in faster-growing slash pine and loblolly pine between 1930 and 1940. Though this practice has hindered the recovery of the once bountiful trees, it is not all gloom and doom for the longleaf pine.

Longleaf resurgence was jump-started by the discovery of a financially lucrative use for the slow-growing tree that did not require reaping, replanting and waiting. "The renaissance of longleaf pine has a lot to do with the pine-straw market," which really took off during the mid-1980s, Campbell said. Pine straw has given landowners an economic reason to grow the evergreen that isn't bound by the constraints of logging, he added. The continual raking of needles does not restore ideal longleaf forests, but it is a step in the right direction, says the N.C. Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership.

The partnership's objective is to balance ecological and economic needs by determining where conservation is essential and development tolerable.

"We respect the human element," Campbell said about people who generate income from longleaf products. "We're engaged in a collaborative process with landowners to help them achieve economic goals and conservation goals." This approach has protected 10,000 acres of longleaf forest in the Sandhills in the last five years. Regardless of the amount saved, however, forests that cannot be cared for properly will not be much improved. "The longleaf system requires fire to maintain itself," Campbell said. "When development encroaches on forests, there's a conflict, because people don't want fire near their neighborhoods." "We will slowly lose the integrity of the system if we can't use fire." Local longleaf forests are proof of the benefit of fire.

The 60,000-acre Sandhills Game Land manages about 45,000 acres of longleaf pine, most of which is high quality. "The whole area was logged over," Beck said, gesturing to a stand of trees that range in age



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from 60 to 80 years. "This is what's come back." Beck and his game-land colleagues frequently burn the longleaf ecosystems that have been able to re-establish themselves.

Prescribed fires maintain the forests' proper appearance and health. These systems are characterized by an open, park-like look with a single species - longleaf pine - dominating the over-story, Beck said. There is barely any mid-story, but the ground cover is very diverse. Many of the ground-cover plants and shrubs rely on flames to thrive. Without fire, mid-story species such as scrub oak will quickly obscure the lower-growing grasses, herbs and flowers from the sunshine they need.

"Sunlight hitting the ground makes the longleaf forest plant diversity possible," Beck said. Fire is also good for plants to several other reasons. Wiregrass, for instance, requires fire to flower and release its seeds. Autumn gentian, whose startling blue flowers unfurl this time of year, is similarly dependent on a healthy longleaf system.

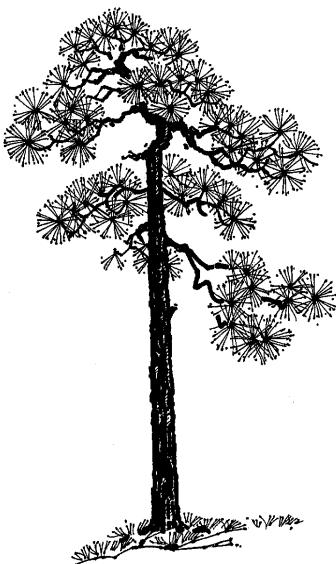
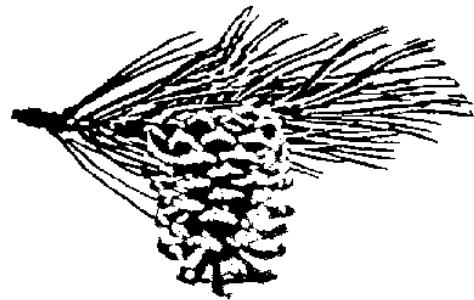
The pine tree itself is no different - its seeds need fire just as much.

After an area has been burned, the forest floor has more clear space and bare soil for seeds to germinate in, Beck said. The vegetation and debris that have been scorched and left behind as ash is also important. Fire is part of the nutrient cycle, he said, because the ash acts as a sort of fertilizer for remaining plants. And when plants and trees flourish, so do the animals.

Red-cockaded woodpeckers nest in older longleaf pines. The birds also get the majority of their food from the trees in which they live. "The pines, that's where the woodpeckers get all their ants, spiders, grubs" and other meals, Beck said. Red-cockaded woodpeckers, and roughly 16 other longleaf forest dwellers, are listed as federal species of concern.

The fox squirrel, northern pine snake, southern hognose snake and pine barrens treefrog all seem to be suffering the same fate as their forest home. "As federal species of concern, they aren't listed as threatened or endangered, but this is because we don't know enough about them," Campbell said. "There are projects under way to learn about these animals," he said, "but our concern is that if we take too long to see what

they require, their habitat will be gone." This is why the N.C. Sandhills Conservation Partnership is working to protect the entire longleaf ecosystem, rather than just what one or two animals need. "Our goal is to be proactive so that these species won't be listed" as threatened or endangered in the future, Campbell said.



**Safe Harbor Update**

**92 Agreements**

**49,234 acres**

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
NORTH CAROLINA SANDHILLS SUB-OFFICE**



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## **Forest Landbird Legacy Program cont.**

pleted and approved by the NCWRC. Treatments will be scheduled for completion within 24 months of signing the FLLP agreement. Each participant may only receive one cost-sharing agreement per year. Participants may reapply in subsequent years. No participant may receive more than \$10,000 reimbursement from FLLP.

**How will others know I am participating in this program?** Participants having existing habitat that already demonstrates conservation of biodiversity in mature forests for the benefit of forest-dependent landbirds may be certified as Forest Landbird Legacy Habitat participants and receive the FLLP sign and certificate. Certified sites demonstrate the goal of the FLLP and serve to educate the public and recognize landowners who participate in the program.

**How do I apply to become part of this program?** Contact a FLLP representative in your area to discuss your interest and schedule a site visit. Applications will be reviewed and ranked by the FLLP partnership. Those selected will be offered a participation agreement and cost-sharing if appropriate.

**Coastal Plain:**

David H. Allen, NCWRC (252) 448-1546  
Don Barker, NCWRC (919) 751-0976  
Bill Edwards, NRCS (919) 751-0976  
Vic French, NCWRC (910) 259-3470  
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John Stanton, USFWS (252)-473-6983 (ext.249)  
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John Isenhour, NCWRC (704) 637-2400  
Mark Johns, NCWRC (919) 852-5124  
Jeff Marcus, NCWRC (910) 281-4388  
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